

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

MAYOR AND COUNCIL MINUTES NOVEMBER 2, 2017 7:30 P.M.

OPENING STATEMENT: Mayor Stephen K. Pote called the meeting to order at 7:34 PM and made the following statement: Under the provisions of N.J.S.A.10:4-6 et seq., notice of the time and place of this meeting was given by way of annual notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, and Star Ledger, and posted at Borough Hall.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG and a MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN, SERVING HOME AND ABROAD.

ROLL CALL:

Joren [P] Black [P] Nehls [P] Gibbs [P] Mobus [P] Sopko [P]

Also present were Administrator Tom Atkins, Attorney Albert Cruz, Clerk Michelle DeRocco, and Administrative Assistant Regina Angelo.

There were 35 members of the public present.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES:

1. Administration & Finance –There was no report but Councilman Gibbs said a meeting is scheduled for Monday at 8:00 AM.

2. Police – Council President Joren reported the fall firearms qualification training was recently completed and they are completing other mandatory training requirements before the end of the year. The Department participated in the DEA's operation takeback for unused/expired medications for proper disposal. She added that they collected nearly 10 pounds of unused medications. Also, Black Friday preparations are in full swing and the Department has been in contact with all major retail stores to discuss security operations for that evening.

3. Public Works / Buildings and Grounds – Councilman Nehls said on the agenda there is a proposal being approved for removal of asbestos at the Ness property, once the asbestos is removed the demolition can be completed.

4. Public Affairs:

Open Space – Councilman Sopko said there was no meeting for the Open Space Committee, therefore, there was no report.

Environmental – Councilman Sopko reported the Environmental Commission held a meeting on October 23rd. They had a guest visitor, George Stafford who encouraged support of question number two on the ballot in this year's General Election. He mentioned at the last meeting we had consensus to increase the fee for the tree bank per tree fee to \$350.00 dollars, and asked if this will now go to to Laws and Ordinance Committee. Mayor Pote asks the Council for a consensus and all agreed. Councilman Sopko commented that there is a considerable effort being made out there regarding the proper plantings for Somerset Street and the islands. He mentioned that the Warren Green Fair for 2018 will be held at the high school parking lot, and added a recycling note from Rachael Funcheon who found a company that takes styrofoam egg cartons. He said she is trying to get some bins put in for that purpose. He also added that their next meeting is scheduled for November 27th.

Recreation – Councilman Mobus reported there was no quorum for last night's meeting so it had to be postponed to next week or the following week. Councilman Mobus also thanked the Mayor and Council for attending the Harvest Festival and said it was really a great day and everyone had a nice time. He also commented the trip for the Devils/Rangers game on December 21st is moving forward. The Recreation Commission is funding the cost for transportation, leaving from Police headquarters at 5:00 pm, noting 40 tickets are available. Mayor Pote said he would like to also thank Linda and the Recreation Committee for their participation with the Harvest Festival and all the donations received.

Historical – Councilman Mobus had no report.

Board of Health – Councilman Black had no report but did comment their next meeting is scheduled for November 16th.

6. Laws/Ordinances – Council President Joren had no report but said a meeting is scheduled for November 13th.

Ray Barratt, Valley Road, said the new permission letter for the deer culling does advise residents that signing up opens them up to OPRA disclosure. He asked if this means the Borough will publish the exact addresses on the website. Attorney Cruz replied the new permission slip does advise residents it is subject to OPRA, however it has not yet been sent out yet. He explained OPRA also has 28 exemptions, and that each request will be evaluated in context. Mr. Barratt asked if the Police Department will receive training in regard to the regulations, and Mr. Atkins replied the police are informed however it is a dynamic process. He asked if there is something reported to them to investigate just give them an opportunity to gather the facts.

Ashley Cohen, Hill Hollow Road, said the resolution, if passed, says shot guns and muzzle loaders are allowed but the permission form only says shot guns. She also said there are different dates for both under the DEP regulations. Mayor Pote comments he believes the resolution is accurate and asks the permission slips be looked at for consistency. Mr. Atkins commented the intent was for either type of weapon to be able to be used.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

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NEW BUSINESS

CONSENT AGENDA: The Consent Agenda items listed below were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council President Joren and a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye.”

Approval of the following Council minutes:

October 19, 2017 – Regular Session

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Borough Reports:

Environmental Commission Minutes - September 25, 2017
Planning Board Minutes - August 15, September 19, 2017

Acknowledging Receipt of the following Correspondence:

- #55- Township of Bridgewater 10/17/17 Notice of Adoption of Land Use/ ReZoning Ordinance No. 17-21 c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Board
- #56 - Township of Bridgewater Planning Board 10/30/17 Notice of Public Hearing on the Amendment and Supplement to the Housing Element of the Master Plan and Fair Share Plan c: M & C, TEA, Pl. Board
- #57 - Somerset County Planning Board 10/30/17 Resolution Celebrating National Community Planning Month c: M & C, Pl. Board

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CONSENT AGENDA RESOLUTIONS: The Consent Agenda Resolutions listed below were unanimously adopted following a motion by Council Presdient Joren and a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye.”

R1:11/02/17 Purchases Over \$2,000. - Office Business Systems, Inc. (PD - Maintenance Contr.)
Fail Safe Testing, Inc. (FD - Hose & Ladder Test)
Bako Construction (Cap. - Ness Farm / Asbestos Removal)

- R2: Appointment of Alternate Fire Sub-Code Official / Dave Maas
- R3: Appointment of Alternate Electric and Plumbing Sub-Code Officials / Ralph Contardo,
Daniel Niro
- R4: Authorize Return of Sewer Overpayments / As listed on Resolution
- R5: Authorize Renewal of Commodity Resale Agreement with Somerset County
- R6: Authorize Shared Service Agreement - Plainfield Municipal Utilities Authority

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NON-CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS: Items listed below will be individually addressed and acted upon accordingly. Council reserves the right to refer an item to Committee for further review and discussion.

Councilman Gibbs moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Mobus. Mayor Pote asked for comments

R7:11/02/17 Authorize 2017-2018 Deer Management Program / Warren Blue Ridge Sportsmen, Inc.

Discussion – R7 - Authorize 2017-2018 Deer Management Program

Council President Joren had the following comments: *For the last 13 years, I have sat on this dais and voted against the hunt, for many of the reasons that have been discussed and debated in the weeks leading up to tonight's vote. After tonight's vote I will continue to speak out against an annual hunt, against the use of bow and arrow and of cross bows. I will continue to create a balance in the appointment of members to the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee so that new ideas and new information can be discussed reasonably with new directions and recommendations that don't require the slaughter of animals that are indigenous to our land. I will continue to work towards greater transparency for all our boards and commissions so our residents don't have to work so hard to know what the issues are and the steps taken by the governing body. "I want to thank the group of individuals who stepped up this year and made valid and sensible suggestions and provided good information to the effect that maybe we do not need a deer cull every year. Their hard work in researching information and making the effort to come to council meetings and engage with the Council has given me new confidence that there are members of our community who value our wildlife and enjoy living alongside and sharing the land with the deer and the squirrels and the chipmunks and the groundhogs and the rabbits and every other animal who eats a flower, bush or tree or the tasty vegetables you planted last spring." A few thoughts- the annual push for a deer cull seems to center around four issues- destruction of residential landscape, Lyme disease, car collisions and the understory. I truly do not understand why it is government's role to protect private lawns. As one resident spoke at our meeting several weeks ago, it is possible to have a beautiful lawn in Watchung with deer as your neighbor. Take the time to plant the deer resistant flowers and shrubberies, use deer repellent or fence your property. Our Watchung Health Officer has been quoted as saying the number of Lyme disease cases in Watchung is statistically insignificant. And I am going to quote from our own Borough newsletter- "The good news is that Lyme disease is preventable." And it follows with a list of common sense suggestions of what you should do to prevent a tick bite. And again, it's not just deer who carry ticks, it is all the small wildlife that live in our woods and fields or even your own dog or cat. Car collisions are a serious issue and one injury due to an animal crossing the road is too many, but that will always happen, no matter the population of the deer, the squirrels, even the geese, although people seem to slow down for them. Facts that were brought out in the deer discussion include statistics that in the last 7 years deer have been involved in 2% of auto accidents which means that 98% of accidents were due to other driving factors such as speeding, texting, phone usage, and other distractions and alcohol or drug use. There are ways we could get that 2% number even lower and that should be an area that the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee should be researching. There has been a wealth of testimony to the damage that is being done to our forests- the understory. And this is an issue that has conflicting arguments and I think, it is an issue that there will never be agreement on. But there are many experts that say the forest loss is a result of the fragmentation of our woodlands through development, in our case over 50 years of new houses and trees lost to landscaped yards. Our remaining woodland fragments have become too small to support many of the plants that need a forest interior. Landscaping practices also harm biodiversity when rains carry harsh fertilizers and pesticides into woodland areas. Lawn chemicals, drought, over- development- all reflect on our remaining forest areas. Plants can be introduced into forest areas that are not native and will have an adverse effect to the native ecosystem. All of this information is fact and yet we continue to blame only the deer. There is so much material- on both sides of the issue – but I believe there is enough solid information on the issues I just mentioned, that the deer should not take the blame for Watchung's loss of forested land. For all the reasons just stated, I will be voting NO on this resolution.*

Councilman Nehls had the following comments: *Mr. Mayor, Council Members and Residents, since I have been on the council I have voted for the continuation of the deer hunt. However, over the past several weeks information has been provided to the Mayor and council regarding the number of deer in town. It has been shown by two surveys that the numbers of deer are down over previous years and has been shown by several residents this decrease has been quite significant. My family and I have lived in our home for over 30 years. I have seen a decrease in the numbers of deer in my neighborhood over this time period. My neighborhood has Mobus and Philips fields and my home is in the pathway for deer to get to those locations. The number of deer that should be found in a square mile has changed over this time from between 20 to 40 deer per square mile down to now 10 deer or less per square mile. This moving number concerns me. I do understand the concern of residents with respect to the damage of their ornamental plants by deer. I have over the past used deer repellants on my plants and that does work. We also opted to plant shrubs and plantings that deer do not particularly like. These were based on the recommendation of our local garden club and the deer have not eaten or disturbed any of the plantings for over 15 years. I grew up in Kearny which when I left to move to this area did not have deer around. Seeing deer and other wildlife has always been one of the benefits I have found with this area. Based on these points I am voting no against the deer hunt.*

Councilman Gibbs had the following comments: *Several weeks ago, this Council heard from several groups and residents concerning our Local Deer Management Program which we authorize each year to control and maintain our resident deer population. It would be an understatement to say that passions are high from all concerned. Speaking for myself only, I truly appreciated the information presented by both sides. It was informative, eye opening in some cases, and much of it, was based on empirical data, observations and fact-based science. Understandably, some of it was based on expressive viewpoints and beliefs. In considering the request from some of our residents to re-evaluate our local deer management program, I listened closely to the information presented and performed my own independent research. Not only did I look for scientific and fact-based information on deer biology, ecological and biodiversity impacts, management options, disease vectors, and the like, I also reviewed several texts on the ethical and moral impacts a local deer management program has on our resident deer population. We heard from many people, on both sides, about the impact to our forests and ornamental plants and potential ways to avoid those impacts (from fencing to planting more “deer friendly” species). We heard about the number of motor vehicle accidents reported that were caused by deer (18 with 5 of those resulting in injuries). I heard stories from residents of aggressive bucks, particularly during rutting season. We also heard many stories about how some of our residents enjoy seeing the deer in their backyards and what wildlife means to them. I took all of those at face value and gave each the benefit of the doubt when thinking of how to proceed. With regard to Watchung’s deer population, our most recent aerial survey conducted earlier this year identified 165 deer in the Borough’s 6.2 square mile area. This number is admittedly less than years in which other counts were conducted, and certainly much less than the original deer population of 1,700+ identified in 2002/2003 on the Boroughs initial application to the state for a LDMP. At 165 deer, that equates to approximately 27 deer per square mile in the Borough’s 6.2 square mile area. Some of our residents have argued that 27 deer per square mile falls within the original 20-40 deer per square mile goal outlined in the original LDMP application from 2002/2003 and thus the Borough should cease or at a minimum pause the annual LDMP to give our resident deer population a rest and allow them to exist without the pressure of being hunted. However, 27 deer per square mile exceeds most scientific based recommendations for a deer population in balance with the surrounding environment. In order to maintain a healthy forest and understory, most sources recommend fewer than 20 deer per square mile which would allow for significant forest regeneration. Admittedly, there are some differences in the number recommended, but none of the more recent recommendations that I reviewed were more than 20 deer per square mile. More than 20 deer per square mile may also contribute to continued impacts to our forests and understory, risk of vehicle collisions, and the threat of transmitting diseases like Lyme disease to our residents although admittedly deer are not the only culprit in the complex web which contributes to Lyme disease transmission. As we noted during the presentations made to this Council, 18 motor vehicle accidents were reported to have been caused by deer. It is likely that many more went unreported for assorted reasons we can only speculate on. 5 of those motor vehicle accidents resulted in injuries to the drivers or passengers. While the deer may need to be considered in this equation, the safety of our human neighbors and passersby weigh more heavily in my mind. With regard to safety, some of our residents expressed discomfort and fear at the thought of having firearms discharged within the Borough. However, I am persuaded by the fact that the hunters utilized by the Borough are experienced hunters employing prudent and safe firearms handling practice as approved by the NJEP and in accordance with the parameters outlined in our Borough Ordinances, state law, and the LDMP. Most of the sites designated where hunting will occur are Borough owned or private property where consent is given to hunt. Safety is, and always should be, the primary and first concern. I encourage our hunters to be vigilant, as they have been since coming on to conduct the LDMP, in observing the highest level of firearms safety for both their and our residents’ protection. Finally, I read several treatises on the ethics of deer management and wildlife in general including “The Role of ethical Judgements Related to Wildlife Fertility Control” by a group of authors from Cornell University. While not conclusive in its findings, I took two things away from this research. First, that any action must be feasible to implement and funding available to pay for those actions. While some of the alternative methods offered by some of our residents and their presenters may be easy to implement (reflectors for example), most are not, in my mind, viable or practical for the Borough to conduct especially from a cost perspective. Second, that sometimes “bad things happen to good animals”. The real lesson of course is that we must balance the desires of our community with the empirical data that is presented to us by experts in this area. Thus, I believe the continuation of Watchung’s LDMP is necessary to achieve and maintain the Boroughs resident deer population at a reasonable and healthy level in balance with our forests and understory, and in our interactions with our residents and neighbors. That is not to say that improvements to our process cannot be made, and a reasonable case for same was made by some of our residents. First, improved communications with residents through the Borough website regarding when and approximately where hunting activities will be occurring can be more transparent. In that regard, informing our residents of hunting activities will provide advance notice and warning to avoid particular areas and minimize the possibility of any mishap. It should be emphasized that I trust the judgment and experience of our hunters to assess whether a particular situation (i.e. - the presence the others) is too dangerous to conduct hunting activities. I also would expect our residents to avoid purposefully putting themselves in a situation where conflict or a mishap may occur. Second, I see no harm to letting balanced dialogue be a part of and heard at the Wildlife Management Advisory Committee level. Let me be clear: I respect the volunteer service of our WMAC members and the hard work they have given to this issue and the Borough over the years. I believe their motivations and recommendations over the years have been made with the best interests of the Borough at heart. Still, there is nothing wrong in allowing differing views and opinions to be considered when the WMAC is making its annual recommendation to the Mayor and Council on the LDMP provided those views and opinions are balanced and contributory to the discussion.*

Councilman Black said the meeting showed both sides had very important concerns whether you are pro or anti hunt. He also said, what came out of the meeting was that both sides agreed there was a dilemma and a problem that needed to be addressed. He added he has heard inflated and real numbers in all the years he has been on the Council but the numbers he is hearing now are much more realistic. He advised he will be voting yes for the hunt. He said our Council President worked very diligently on this situation.

He would like to see both sides work together so we can head in a good direction. He said he is voting yes because he feels we are going towards a good direction with bringing both groups together.

Councilman Mobus said in his opinion largely through observation there are too many deer living in Watchung. Despite the decline in the population since 2006 survey he feels we should continue an aggressive deer management program. The problem of overpopulation has to do with the decline in forestry and uninhabitable space for the deer to live and roam. He also said, this morning in the news he saw a deer propelled himself through a window at a bank in Livingston and also saw on Mountain Blvd. a mutilated deer carcass. He explained that the deer in his yard are destroying his landscaping, leaving droppings and increasing the number of ticks that find their way onto his dog and then into his home. The deer contribute to the threat of disease and are damaging to the environment. He said he could not in good conscious vote to suspend the hunt due to these threats against the residents of the town. The deer cull has been effective at reducing the population and those efforts need to continue. He commented he does sympathise for the animal lover residents and wildlife advocates of the town but he feels it is critical we continue the good work being done. Councilman Mobus said he supports the cull for the 2017/2018 season and also the revision to the rules and regulations which includes a reduction to the length of the hunt.

Councilman Sopko said over the last months it has been nice to see such a healthy, educated and respectful debate amongst our property owners on this issue. Councilman Sopko said there are excellent points on all sides. He also said public safety is the issue he is concerned for, and for that reason he will be voting in favor of the resolution.

With no other comments from the Council, Mayor Pote called for a vote, and the vote was as follows: Black, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, “aye”; Joren, Nehls, “nay.”

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PUBLIC PORTION - GENERAL DISCUSSION

Maria Alberto, Acorn Road, said she has minutes from the October 5th meeting and it says the library discussion would be on the agenda for tonight’s meeting. Mayor Pote commented it was discussed at prior meetings before and it was also in the paper that the library discussion would not be on the agenda until the November 20th meeting. Clerk Michelle DeRocco replied she emailed Ms. Alberto over a week ago regarding the meeting date of the library discussion. Mayor Pote apologized for any inconvenience and said things were moved to be flexible based on the availability of the council and the deer discussion. Ms. Alberto commented on the 2012 vote of “no” for the non-binding referendum asking if the town would or would not want to fund a new library. She said we have had an architect give us plans for about a 4 million dollar library and then a revised version for a library costing around 2 million dollars just for the shell of the library. These plans are for a library the people of Watchung voted no for. Ms. Alberto said she cannot understand why we need to build a library when we have two within two minutes from our town, and also two beautiful libraries at our schools. She also commented about paying the library tax that will have to be paid on top of the cost of constructing a new Library. She said we cannot ever really be able to afford a new library and it will be a burden to the town of Watchung. She asks that this issue be brought to a referendum so you can ask the people of Watchung what they want.

Joe DiNicholas, Rock Road East, read from an article in the newspaper quoting the Mayor, and commented it sounded like the library was signed, sealed and delivered. He also said he has been in town 26 years and the reputation he has learned now about Watchung that exists is the crime rate per capita. He also said he never hears any focus on that and maybe we should address that first instead of putting up a library.

Mayor Pote responded that our police are working hard to reduce this crime rate. He explained 20 percent of our tax burden is paid for by the commercial zone on Route 22 so it’s a give and take. Any town that has the ability to have that kind of commercial zone also faces those types of issues. He said he constantly looks for opportunities for those who measure us to be looking at what it means when we talk about what the crime rate means. He explained that there are different types of crime rate and 95 percent of ours is shop lifting. He also said to he doesn’t like seeing it but when you look at where the crimes are committed largely they are down on Route 22.

Hans Juette, Elsinore Drive, said he thinks Dr Kelly’s presentation at the Deer Forum was excellent. He commented that he was disappointed people opposing culling didn’t have one scientific study. He said we need to know where we are and where we are going. He also complimented the council for standing up and counting the deer. He explained we should count the deer every year and recommended doing a ground count in February. He said the other thing we need to do is employ a professional in the area who will tell us the condition of the forest. He explained that he looked at the Wildlife Committee as a vehicle and tried to do it objectively. He asked Councilman Nehls if he had any saplings on his property.

Councilman Nehls explained he has fairly well grown trees that have been there for 30 years but he doesn’t have any saplings because he has nowhere to put them. He agreed with Mr. Juette that we need counts. He said he asked the Wildlife Management Committee to come to the council with additional information but they never did, and commented that they have been very one sided. He said he sprays his landscaping and the deer leave his area alone.

Jane Disch, Stanie Glen Road, said she would like to discuss the possibility of a Park and Ride in Watchung. The Park and Ride would benefit the commuters and raise and maintain the home values in town. She said when you compare the towns that have public transportation they have increases. She said she does believe there is a correlation between having public transportation versus not having it. She explained our neighboring town Warren is getting a Park and Ride and once they do, buyers make their way to Warren. She mentioned in her 27 years of real estate nobody has ever gotten into her car and said take me to a town with a library, however, they ask about transportation to NYC. She explained that Warren's Park and Ride will only be open to Warren residents, and suggested the following locations for Watchung: the Sears parking lot, St. Mary's Church, a property for sale at 901 Valley Road, and possibly Brookdale Swim Club.

Michael Schachter, Stonegate Drive, said he has been in this community for 25 years and now just about every single person wants to know how they can commute into the city. There is a wave of younger people coming out here who like our community and schools, and suggested that a questionnaire to find out if they would be interested in this would be a good idea.

Mayor Pote commented that he is very interested in finding out what the demand is. He said he believes Warren surveyed their people on this topic and we need to do the same. He also commented that he is scheduled for a meeting with a few other mayors to discuss the fact that we don't have rail to go into New York. We need to look at locations also and at this point one that wasn't mentioned was Wilson Memorial Church which could be a possibility. He explained he just learned of an app "Box Car" which is a company that specializes in setting up bus rides for people to get into New York from New Jersey, and is based on the demand. He said we need to look into options.

Mr. Schachter commented that Springfield has a Park and Ride, one in the center of town and also a supplement to a jitney that takes people to the trains. Mr. Schachter said in his opinion the circle traffic, especially around rush hour, can be a problem. The ability to join in with other buses may be easier as well from Brookdale Swim Club.

Mr. Atkins commented he did reach out to the Warren Administrator regarding their Park & Ride.

Councilman Sopko encouraged everyone to contact NJ Transit that they would like to see a Park and Ride in Watchung so they can make note of it.

A resident of Crystal Ridge, said bus routes are very important, and that most commute between 7 AM to 7 PM. He added that the number of commuters on Fridays are less than the amount during the week. He said the movie theater parking lot during the week will have less traffic there and to consider that as a location.

Maryann Cubberly, Brook Drive, said she also got the memo from the minutes regarding the discussion on the library and it was supposed to be at tonight's meeting, expressed her opinion that Administrator Atkins was rude.

Virginia Hartmann, Ellisen Road, said she keeps hearing year after year questions on the library dues. She explained if you have a library building you pay dues to the Somerset County Library System. If you don't have a library you still pay to the Somerset Library System. In order to participate in the system you pay dues. She said no matter what you have to pay your dues. She added we will still have to pay dues if we want to go anywhere in Somerset County.

Councilman Mobus asked if it's a choice to pay into the County system. He suggested we could opt out of the system and the residents can pay per household tax.

Ms. Hartmann commented it is around 200 dollars for a library card. She said if you withdraw from the system and build a library you have to pay for library books, salaries and all the necessary materials.

Councilman Mobus mentioned another option that there could be no library and no system and residents could choose individually if they want to buy into the system or not.

Councilman Gibbs added that in order to leave the Somerset County Library System we would have to hold a binding referendum to leave.

Margaret Ellis, Valley Road, read a letter from the Watchung Library Advisory Board, urging the Council to support a new and spacious adequate Library.

Denise Cohen, Hill Hollow Road, said she moved into Watchung knowing the town didn't have a high school, and has no problem sharing other services with other towns such as a library.

Bill Candiloros, Nottingham Drive, said on the Watchung Neighborhood Facebook page there was a quote from a local realtor who says she has lived in Watchung for 43 years and a realtor for 34 years and most importantly people are looking at property taxes, the school system, and commuting to New York City. She commented in 34 years not one person has asked about a library so we need to consider these things first.

Another Resident, said she has lived in Watchung for 43 years and as a realtor has seen the property values decline. She commented that people are looking for safety, commuting, and schools. These things need to be addressed and they are the most important.

Rachael Funcheon, Cedar Road, said she wanted to thank Deb and Bill for their statements earlier on the deer issue. She added that when this whole thing started about a year ago, they were told to leave emotion out of it. She said her presentation at the forum was nothing but facts and data. She agreed we do need a count every year. She said Dr. Kelly isn't the appropriate person to do the ground count because he promotes deer hunts. She said if the town really cares about the residents, focus should be on car accidents that have nothing to do with the deer. She explained she has statistics from January to June from this year and three of the accidents involve deer and one injury. She commented that to look back at a picture of Watchung in the 1950s, you can see right through the forest, now the forest is so dense you can't even see the ground. She stated we have cut down the forested areas for development, and that if you don't want deer in your backyard put up a fence.

Maria Alberto, Acorn Drive, read a letter from the Somerset County Library System saying the following is a list of municipalities that can use the system at no charge, also a list of municipalities that pay the county tax. She stated there is a list of municipalities that don't pay a dedicated library tax to the county and aren't eligible to a free county library card but can obtain one for an annual fee of 185.00 dollars. This will save the people money and the people can choose to apply and get the card or not. She suggested that if the people of Watchung can't afford the card maybe they could come to the town and apply for one.

Michael Shackner, Stonegate Drive, said the services we are provided here are unbelievable. Our Fire Department is volunteer and they do a great job, as does the Emergency Squad. He mentioned when he had a need for an ambulance three showed up and they did a great job. He commented the services provided by Atlantic needs to be looked at as a supplement to what we have now.

Mayor Pote explained that Atlantic service has been very good and we agree with that. One of the advantages for Atlantic from Watchung is they run the landscape from Bridgewater to Mountainside, so they like Watchung because having a place for them to put their vehicle is strategic which we really like and are supportive of.

Councilman Black asked if Atlantic Ambulance bills directly. Mr. Schachter commented in his case they billed the hospital.

Freddy Hayeck, Sun Bright Road, said he is an EMT on the Watchung Rescue Squad and thanked Denise Wilson for everything she does. He urged others to volunteer, they are trying to get more people on the squad and it's an amazing service.

Anita Marque, Crystal Ridge Drive, said she lives off of East Drive and the deer pass through the streets all the time and the cars slow down and let them pass. She also explained she is disappointed in Raritan Valley Community College knowing their professor is going to towns and promoting the use of weapons, violence and his hunting agenda. She stated she was considering Raritan Valley for her son and she has made a complaint to the college and to the state, saying his actions are unethical.

Virginia Hartmann, Ellisen Road, said she distinctly remembers growing up that we could not see the neighbor's houses whereas now they are plain as day and it's because the deer have eaten all the under-story. She said her husband has planted over 50 trees and it hasn't made a dent in what the deer are eating and they could use a little help.

Mayor Pote commented that he appreciates everyone coming out for a variety of reasons and apologizes again for the inconvenience of people showing up expecting the library discussion. He mentioned on November 20th there will be further library discussion. He appreciates all the input on all issues that came up tonight.

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Council President Joren moved the following resolution with a second by Councilman Nehls and upon roll call the vote was as follows: Joren, Black, Nehls, Gibbs, Mobus, Sopko, "aye."

R8:11/02/17 Executive Session:
Litigation – In the Matter of the Borough of Watchung for Compliance
of its Third Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan,
Docket No. SOM-L-902-15

Upon return to regular session at 10:48 P.M. all Council members previously in attendance were again present.

Mr. Cruz said during the Executive Session the Mayor and Council gave further direction on how to proceed forward with litigation and negotiations with potential developer.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 10:50 PM to the Call of the Chair. The next scheduled meeting of the Mayor and Council to be held Monday, November 20, 2017 at 7:30 P.M. Attorney Cruz commented that there will be a Special Meeting held on Monday, November 20, 2017 starting at 6:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Regina Angelo
Administrative Assistant